



Influence of the “Bhagavad Gita” on the Life and Literary Works of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

Dr. Suman Acharjee
Assistant Professor (English)
Central Sanskrit University
Ekalavya Campus, Tripura, India
Email: sumanacharjee20@gmail.com.

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.12.4.46](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.12.4.46)



Article info

Article Received: 27/09/2024
Article Accepted: 15/10/2024
Published online: 28/10/2024

Abstract

This article focuses on the influence of the ‘Bhagavad Gita’ on the life and literary works of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. It unearths those aspects of his life which are totally shaped and moulded by the inscribed words in the Bhagavad Gita. Individual philosophy, which gets biased and shaped by various facets of a socio-cultural matrix of contemporary society, needs to be refined and channelized in the positive and right direction through the path of spirituality. The Bhagavad Gita, due to its vast trove of knowledge and immemorial influence on human beings’ lives, always remains part and parcel of this mundane human life. Aurobindo Ghosh, who sermonised the contents of the Bhagavad Gita through his life and literary works, needs to be promoted more and more as the present-day education system is being reframed on the parameters of the Indian Knowledge System.

Keywords: Karma (action), Gunah (virtues & vices), Maya (attachment), Moksha (Salvation),

Introduction

Aurobindo Ghosh is profound and multifaceted, shaping his spiritual philosophy and his approach to social and political issues. Aurobindo Ghosh, a prominent Indian philosopher, yogi, and poet, lived from 1872 to 1950. A deep engagement with Indian spirituality marked his intellectual journey, and the Bhagavad Gita played a pivotal role in shaping his thoughts and writings.

Aurobindo Ghosh was exposed to the Bhagavad Gita from a young age. Born in Calcutta, he received a Western education at St. Paul's School and later studied at King's College, Cambridge. However, during his stay in Baroda, India, Aurobindo had a profound encounter with the Bhagavad Gita. In Baroda, Aurobindo delved into the scriptures of India, and the Gita captured his intellectual and spiritual imagination. The Gita's teachings on duty, righteousness, and the path to self-

realization resonated deeply with Aurobindo, setting the stage for the integration of these ideas into his later works.

Integration of Yogic Philosophy

Sri Aurobindo's engagement with the Bhagavad Gita went beyond mere intellectual appreciation. He embraced the yogic philosophy embedded in the Gita, particularly the concept of self-realization through various paths of yoga. Aurobindo emphasized the synthesis of traditional yogic practices, blending the paths of knowledge, devotion, and selfless action to attain a holistic transformation of the individual and society.

A well-known quotation from Sri Aurobindo on the yogic philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita is:

"The teaching of the Gita is intended to lead to the founding of a spiritual consciousness and action in the world and not to a departure from the world into self-absorbed sainthood or monastic quietism." (P.12)

Aurobindo Ghosh articulated his spiritual philosophy through the concept of Integral Yoga, which draws inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita. Integral Yoga aims at the harmonious development of all aspects of an individual – the physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual. This comprehensive approach mirrors the Gita's call for a balanced and integrated life.

In Aurobindo's interpretation, the Gita's emphasis on transcending the ego and connecting with the divine resonates with the integral transformation he envisions for humanity. The Gita's teachings on detachment and selfless action are echoed in Aurobindo's call for a spiritualized activism that seeks not personal gain but the larger well-being of society. One of Sri Aurobindo's well-known quotes on Integral Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita is:

"The Gita is a synthesis of three kinds of Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge, the Yoga

of works and the Yoga of devotion. It is this synthetic Yoga that we find in the Gita." (P.51)

Social and Political Implications

While the Bhagavad Gita is often perceived as a guide to individual spiritual growth, Aurobindo extrapolated its principles to address societal challenges. His interpretation of the Gita provided a philosophical foundation for his views on nationalism and social transformation.

Aurobindo emphasized the concept of dharma from the Gita, not as a static set of rules but as a dynamic and evolving principle. This interpretation allowed him to argue for the active participation of individuals in the betterment of society, aligning with the Gita's call for righteous action in the world.

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita often links its spiritual teachings to broader societal and collective change. One of his key insights on this is:

"The Gita does not preach the distinction between man and man, the division of life between the inner and outer world, the division of action between work for God and work for the world. All human thought and effort must be considered as part of the world's spiritual evolution." (P.137)

One of Aurobindo's notable contributions is his attempt to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. Drawing inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita, he sought to integrate the insights of Indian spirituality with the rational and scientific outlook of the West.

Aurobindo's synthesis aimed at creating a comprehensive worldview that could address the spiritual, psychological, and material dimensions of human existence. In doing so, he hoped to contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive global perspective, rooted in the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita.

Literary and Poetic Expressions

Beyond philosophical treatises, Aurobindo expressed his insights through poetry and literary works. The Bhagavad Gita's influence is evident in his poetic compositions, where themes of divine consciousness, inner awakening, and the pursuit of a higher truth find resonance with the Gita's teachings.

Aurobindo's literary creations serve as a medium for transmitting the spiritual wisdom he gleaned from the Gita to a broader audience. His poems and writings are imbued with the essence of the Gita, inviting readers to embark on their own journeys of self-discovery and transformation.

One of Sri Aurobindo's poetic expressions related to the Bhagavad Gita is from his poem, 'The Message of the Gita', which reflects the essence of its teachings:

"I have veiled my Godhead in the magic
of Time,
And I have slain my immortality
To free the Spirit of the earth-bound
mind
And give to life the glory of the divine."
(P.614)

Legacy and Continuing Influence

Sri Aurobindo's integration of the Bhagavad Gita into his philosophical, spiritual, and social thought has left an enduring legacy. The Aurobindonian approach continues to inspire individuals seeking a holistic and transformative path, blending the timeless wisdom of the Gita with a modern understanding of the world.

Sri Aurobindo's poetry on the Bhagavad Gita reflecting on the modern world is not directly present in a single poem; however, his poetic expressions often encompass themes from the Gita in the context of contemporary life. One of the relevant poems that speaks to the spiritual and worldly

synthesis, a key theme of the Gita in modern times, is 'Thought the Paraclete'. It conveys the idea of spiritual transformation within the world:

"The spirit shall look out through
Matter's gaze
And Matter shall reveal the spirit's face.
Then man and superman shall be at one
And the divine incarnate in human
form,
The integral Yoga of the Gita lived."
(P.476)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the influence of the Bhagavad Gita on the writings of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is profound and far-reaching. It shaped not only his spiritual philosophy but also influenced his perspectives on social, political, and cultural issues. Aurobindo's synthesis of Eastern and Western thought, his advocacy for integral transformation, and his poetic expressions all bear the indelible imprint of the Bhagavad Gita, making his body of work a unique contribution to the rich tapestry of Indian philosophical thought.

References:

- Sri Aurobindo, Aurobindo Ghose, *Essays on the Gita*; Publisher, Lotus Press, 1995; ISBN, 0914955187, 9780914955184, Pages :588
- Sri Aurobindo, Aurobindo Ghose, *Collected Poems, Volume 2, The Complete Works Of Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust 2009, INDIA
- Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada *A.C.Bhagvad Gita As It Is*, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust; Latest edition (1 January 2019); Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 2019, ISBN : 978-9384564193 & 9384564192, pages 924